

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 JIDDA 04987 171507Z  
ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY SANA

S E C R E T JIDDA 4987

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, SA, SO, ET  
SUBJ: SIAD BARRE'S VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA

1. DURING THE CALL BY THE AMBASSADOR AND DCM ON FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD ON JULY 16, SAUD PROVIDED A BRIEFING ON THE RECENT VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA OF PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE OF SOMALIA.

2. ACCORDING TO SAUD, BARRE VIEWS WITH GREAT SUSPICION THE INTENTIONS OF THE SOVIET UNION IN AFRICA. HE HAS BECOME CONVINCED THAT THE USSR HOPES TO DEVELOP ETHIOPIA AS THE MAJOR MILITARY AND ECONOMIC POWER IN THE AREA. THE SOVIET UNION HAS SELECTED ETHIOPIA FOR THIS ROLE BECAUSE OF (A) ITS STRATEGIC POSITION NOT ONLY AS A RED SEA RIPARIAN BUT ALSO BECUASE OF ITS CONTROL OF THE HEADWATERS OF THE NILE, (B) THE RELATIVE SIZE AND POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF ETHIOPIA COMPARED WITH OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE

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HORN OF AFRICA, AND (C) MENGISTU'S TOTAL RELIANCE ON THE SOVIET UNION NOW THAT HE HAS ALIENATED ALL FACTIONS OF ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY BY HIS WANTON KILLING AND TERROR TACTICS. THIS RELIANCE WILL MAKE MENGISTU A WILLING AN PLIABLE TOOL OF THE SOVIETS.

3. BARRE SAID THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS NOT YET EXERTED

OVERT PRESSURES AGAINST SOMALIA ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME DELAYS IN WEAPONS DELIVERIES. THE SOVIET UNION IS, HOWEVER, STRONGLY URGING SOMALIA TO SUBVERT SOMALIAN NATIONAL INTEREST (E.G. THE OGADEN) TO THE INTEREST OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST SOLIDARITY. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET MILITARY ADVISERS, BARRE DID NOT MAKE A DIRECT REPLY, BUT IMPLIED THAT SOMALIA WOULD BE WILLING TO EXPEL THESE ADVISERS IF THERE WERE ANY MEANINGFUL ALTERNATIVE. IN GENERAL, BARRE ARGUED THAT HE FEELS TRAPPED BUT CANNOT REDUCE HIS DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIET UNION WITHOUT SOME ASSURANCES ON WHAT ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF SUPPORT WOULD THEN BECOME AVAILABLE.

4. SAUD REAFFIRMED THAT SAG WOULD LIKE TO PROVIDE SOME SUPPORT TO BARRE AS A MEANS OF LESSENING THE SOVIET INFLUENCE. HE MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF A MULTILATERAL WESTERN EFFORT TO SUPPLY MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND PERHAPS EVEN MILITARY PERSONNEL TO SOMALIA. HE SAID THAT SAG WOULD BE WILLING TO ASSIST WITH THE EXPENSE.

5. SAUD ALSO QUESTIONED THE DEPTH OF BARRE'S SOCIALIST IDEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS. HE DESCRIBED BARRE AS A POLITICAL PRAGMATIST WHO WOULD ADOPT WHATEVER SYSTEM SEEMED BEST TO MEET THE SEVERE PROBLEMS OF SOMALIA.

6. DCM ASKED SAUD IF BARRE HAD DISCUSSED HIS INTENTIONS  
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TOWARDS THE OGADEN, SAUD REPLIED THAT BARRE HAD NOT DWELT ON THIS ISSUE, BUT IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT HE WOULD MAKE AN EFFORT TO RECOVER THE TERRITORY FOR SOMALIA. SAUD SAID THAT THE ETHIOPIANS HAD BEEN REMISS IN MAKING NO ATTEMPT TO ABSORB EFFECTIVELY THE TERRITORY DURING THE YEARS THAT IT HAS BEEN UNDER ETHIOPIAN CONTROL. THEY HAD NOT SET UP A SCHOOL SYSTEM OR MADE ANY OTHER ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP AN ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS. THE PEOPLE OF THE OGADEN STILL CONSIDER THEMSELVES TO BE SOMALIS, AND SOONER OR LATER THIS PROBLEM WAS CERTAIN TO COME TO A HEAD.

7. DCM SAID THAT THE USG WAS LOOKING INTO THIS MATTER IN WASHINGTON BUT THAT NO FINAL DECISION HAD YET BEEN REACHED. ONE OF OUR CONCERNS WAS THAT MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA WOULD BE USED IN AN ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE SOMALI-ETHIOPIAN BORDER AND THEREBY CREATE A LONG-RANGE, UNSTABLE IRREDENTIST SITUATION. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD ALSO VIOLATE THE IMPORTANT OAU ENDORSED PRINCIPLE OF ACCEPTING THE BOUNDARIES IN AFRICA LEFT BY THE COLONIAL POWERS. IF THIS PRINCIPLE IS UNDERMINED, THERE COULD BE A LONG PERIOD OF TURMOIL AND INSTABILITY IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT.

8. SAUD ADMITTED THAT THESE FACTORS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED, BUT SAID WE SHOULD WEIGHT THEM AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF REDUCING THE SOVIET INFLUENCE IN A STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT COUNTRY LIKE SOMALIA. WHETHER WE HELP BARRE OR NOT, HE WILL PROBABLY MOVE TO ABSORB THE OGADEN, AND WE MAY NOT HAVE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE SOMALIA OUT OF THE SOVIET ORBIT AND TOWARDS THE WEST.

WEST

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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